



International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, CLC

CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS

IAFF LOCAL S-15

PROTECTIVE SERVICES EMPLOYEES COALITION

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February 26, 2009

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

My name is Christopher Alexander. I am a Firefighter/EMT and work at the University of Connecticut Storrs campus. I am also President of IAFF Local S-15 that represents roughly 110 Firefighters and Emergency Medical Personnel employed at UCONN, UCONN Health Center, Bradley International Airport, The Connecticut Air Guard, Southbury Training School, Connecticut Valley Hospital and Central Connecticut State University.

I am addressing you today in **FAVOR** of **H.B. 6194 AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION PRESUMPTIONS FOR FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS AND EMERGENCY RESCUE WORKERS**. IAFF Local S-15 urges your committee's adoption of this legislation.

As a Firefighter it goes without saying that over the span of my career I will be put in situations that are considered hazardous. These include Fires, Chemical and Radiological Emergencies, Bioterrorism, and Mass Casualty Incidents. Those are some of the obvious risks but there are also the blood borne and infectious diseases such as Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, Meningitis, that may not even become evident for several years after an exposure. I risk death or injury every time I respond to an alarm. While risk may be part of my profession, fire fighter deaths and injuries should not be accepted as part of the job. It is presently believed that 90 percent of fire fighter deaths are due to occupationally related illnesses. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that fire fighters are at an increased risk for heart disease, lung disease, cancer and infectious diseases. A 2006 study by the University of Cincinnati revealed that fire fighters are twice as likely as the general population to develop testicular cancer, 50 percent more likely to develop multiple myeloma or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and 28 percent more likely to develop prostate cancer.

Presently, more than 40 states recognize certain illnesses as occupational hazards of fire fighting and have enacted laws presuming these illnesses are job related, safeguarding workers compensation and retirement disability benefits for fire fighters. Over the last two years states such as Vermont and Colorado have signed presumptive legislation that will provide protection to fire fighters exposed to cancer. Connecticut has the potential to expand on this and provide presumptive legislation to protect fire fighters for all strains of Hepatitis, meningitis, tuberculosis, heart disease, non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. As scientific evidence continues to demonstrate the increased risk for heart disease, lung disease, cancer and infectious diseases among fire fighters I encourage you, the, Labor and Public Employees Committee, to adopt **H.B. 6194**.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher Alexander".

Christopher Alexander

PRESIDENT

IAFF LOCAL S-15